of the remaining sites is based on surface indications and on the interrelationship of these sites with ancient Lake Cahuilla. The suggested National Register of Historic Places district would have contributing and non-contributing properties.

Four prehistoric sites may be directly impacted during construction of the new transmission lines. Indirect impacts associated with new access roads or use of the existing road may require inclusion of additional sites, although the final determination of these variables has not been made. Direct impacts to the archaeological sites located east of the transmission line could include excavation for footings, general ground clearing, and the movement of workers and equipment.

In order to protect the information that is present in this region, a treatment plan has been developed by the applicants and submitted to the BLM for approval. The treatment plan is intended to pose questions and define data needs for sites that may be directly or indirectly affected by the proposed project. This plan would be developed in concert with final project design information and the precise location of on-the-ground impacts. Surveyors would establish specific work zone areas and the locations would be checked by field archaeologists to determine potential impacts. Work or access areas that correspond to archaeological sites would be defined and data recovery would be implemented. The plan would include protection measures, monitoring steps, and Native American consultation. The plan would also include recommendations for long term protection of the study area resources.

To mitigate for the potential impact to valuable cultural resources from the construction of this project, the applicants have agreed to implement a mitigation plan that complies with the treatment plan, subject to the approval of the BLM. The mitigation measures would apply only to those areas identified as permanent or temporary construction impact areas that correspond with surface indications of historic properties. Mitigation would consist of measures to avoid impacts to sensitive cultural resource sites, monitoring of work on the proposed transmission lines, recovery of cultural materials and information, appropriate cataloging and curation, and reporting the findings. The mitigation measures are listed in Section 2.2.6 of this EA.

4.7 Visual Resources

Construction of the proposed project would add electrical transmission towers and conductors to the landscape adjacent to the existing SDG&E transmission line. The evaluation of potential visual impacts takes into account factors such as distance, the angle of observation, the duration of view, the relative size or scale of the project, and the light conditions within the proposed project area. Views by persons from highways or travel routes are not considered to be as sensitive as those from recreational areas or residences due to both the nature of the land use and the longer duration of the view.

Views from residences are typically to be considered more sensitive, since views from a residence are typically more frequent and of longer duration. Other views, such as those of any recreational users in the area, are considered to be of moderate sensitivity.

The varying degrees of visual contrast are outlined below:

- **High:** Strong and moderate visual contrast associated with the presence of the project visible from high sensitivity viewpoints (e.g., residences, recreation sites, scenic routes, etc.) within the 0 to 0.5 mile distance zones.

- **Moderate:** Weak visual contrasts visible from high sensitivity viewpoints within the 0.5 to 1-mile (i.e., foreground) distance zones and strong or moderate visual contrast visible in the 1 to 3 mile (i.e., middleground) distance zone. Also a result of landscapes rated Class B and strong visual contrast from the proposed project.

- **Low:** Weak visual contrast visible from high sensitivity viewpoints within the 1 to 3 mile distance zone, and strong, moderate, or weak contrast visible within the 3 miles and beyond distance zone. Low scenic quality impacts would result.

- **None:** The element contrast is not visible or perceived. No scenic quality impacts would result.

As described in Section 3.7.2, the project area is a BLM Class III Visual Resource Inventory Area. Class III objectives stipulate that the existing character of the landscape be partially retained and any level of change should be moderate. In addition, while management activities may attract attention, they should not dominate the views of casual observers.

Four Key Observation Points (KOPs) were identified for the proposed project area, situated both east and west of the proposed project alignment along State Route 98. Given that roadway users constitute the vast majority of viewers with regard to the proposed project site, all of the KOPs were situated on, or immediately adjacent to, SR-98. The KOPs were situated approximately 0.3 miles east of the proposed alignment (KOP 1), 1.0 miles east (KOP 2), from the nearest residence 1.3 miles east of the proposed alignment (KOP 3), and 0.7 miles west of the proposed alignment along State Route 98 (KOP 4). Visual simulations were generated from each of these points to display the addition of the proposed project to the existing landscape (Figures 4.7.1-4.7.5).

The visual simulations indicate that the project would not be a visually prominent addition to the existing landscape. While the proposed project would be visible from SR-98 (KOPs 1, 2 and 4), both the presence of similar towers among the existing SDG&E 230kV alignment and the somewhat open texture of the steel lattice towers would lessen

A. Existing Conditions

B. With Proposed Project

PHOTO SOURCE: Intergen, 2001

FIGURE 4.7.1

View From Key Observation Point 1

(0.7 Miles East of Existing SDG&E Transmission Line Along Highway 98, Looking West)

A. Existing Conditions

B. With Proposed Project

PHOTO SOURCE: Intergen, 2001

FIGURE 4.7.2

View From Key Observation Point 2

(1.0 Miles East of Existing SDG&E Transmission Line Along Highway 98, View West)

A. Existing Conditions

B. With Proposed Project

PHOTO SOURCE: Intergen, 2001

FIGURE 4.7.3

View From Key Observation Point 3

(1.3 Miles East of Existing SDG&E Transmission Line Along Highway 98, View West Adjacent to Single Family Residence, Adjacent to Highway 98 and Pullian Intersection)

A. Existing Conditions

B. With Proposed Project

PHOTO SOURCE: Intergen, 2001

FIGURE 4.7.4

View From Key Observation Point 4.1

(0.3 Miles East of Existing SDG&E Transmission Line Along Highway 98, View Northeast)

A. Existing Conditions

B. With Proposed Project

PHOTO SOURCE: Intergen, 2001

FIGURE 4.7.5

Key Observation Point 4.2

(1.0 Miles East of Existing SDG&E Transmission Line Along Highway 98, View Southwest)

the visual effects of the introduction of this additional form into the landscape. The transmission lines would diminish dramatically in the strength of their visual impression with distance, and the lattice construction would allow the viewer to see natural light, and to some degree, the background landscape through the tower. The proposed project would not affect the color value and hue of the existing landscape.

The view from the nearest residence (KOP 3) would not be substantially affected, given the similar distant forms already present and the low-lying landforms and vegetation between the residence and the proposed project. These landforms would have the effect of breaking up the already diffuse views of the proposed project alignment.

The completed project would be a permanent and prominent feature in the landscape visible to travelers on SR-98 and sightseers. The existing SDG&E transmission line is immediately adjacent to the proposed routes and other electrical transmission facilities are also within view in this area. The proposed project would therefore not introduce a new and obtrusive element into the landscape.

It is unavoidable that, to some degree, visual resource impacts would result from the construction and operation of the proposed project. Construction-related visual impacts, while involving lay-down areas, helicopter installation of towers, and work crews over a period of up to six months, would be temporary. Operational visual impacts would result from the proposed project being seen from multiple viewpoints and from the effects on the existing scenic values of the landscape.

Implementation of the proposed project would meet the visual contrast criteria established under the objectives developed for VRM Class III. These objectives stipulate that the existing character of the landscape be partially retained and any level of change should be moderate. A project in a VRM Class III area may attract attention although it should not dominate views. The proposed project meets these criteria.

4.8 Paleontological Resources

It is not known if important paleontological resources are present below the surface on the site. Such resources could be present and could be harmed by excavation, particularly by excavation for transmission line support structure footings in older alluvium or pre-Quaternary geologic formations. In order to assure that the scientific information represented by any fossils that are present is recovered, the applicants have agreed to a monitoring and reporting program to be implemented during construction. The mitigation measures are listed in Section 2.2.6 of this EA.